

For this second symposium, the period of about 300 years from early modern to the beginning of modern period (around 1600 to 1900), directly linked to the current situation will be examined.

After 1600, the three powerful political powers, the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan (1603-1867), the Romanov dynasty in Russia (1613-1917) and the Qing dynasty in China (1616-1912) rose in the surrounding area of north of Japan archipelago (Tsugaru, Shimokita Peninsula, Hokkaido, the Kuril Islands, Sakhalin, Estuary of the River Amur) which determined the fate of this area. These political powers reached this region during the 17th century and had attempted to put the population under their control, which sometimes led to violent conflicts. Under such international geopolitics, local people using their own economic and political power succeeded in making those three powers even. However, gradually the three political powers started to overwhelm that of the local people and the latter gradually lost its political and economic initiative. This decline lasted for about 150 years from 1700 to the middle of the 1800.

First, the Ainu in Hokkaido yielded to the Matsumae clan who was backed up by the Tokugawa shogunate after the Shakushain's War in 1669. From the beginning of 1700, the Russian Cossacks overran the Ainu of the Kuril Islands. On the contrary, in Sakhalin and Amur River basin, local people were able to maintain their political and economic initiative for a relatively long time taking advantage of the power of the Qing dynasty. However, with the decline of that dynasty after 1800, the Tokugawa shogunate from the south penetrated Sakhalin and took over the trade leadership. Furthermore, in the area of Tsugaru and Shimokita where the Ainu inhabited, both the Hirosaki and Morioka clans started to ban their culture.

Under such circumstances, Japan and Russia transformed themselves to become modern nations in the late 1800. This move was, to some extent, influenced by the arrival of the Western European power which had started from the late 1700. Japan and Russia as the modern nations, divided the area as "territory" regardless of the inhabitants' wish, exploited its resources and sent a number of immigrants for that purpose. Such a modern nation's policy was the worst blow to the local people and thereafter, they waned and became an ethnic minority.

What needs to be studied here are the following questions on those people who enjoyed prosperity during the medieval period:

- 1) Why were they stripped off of such prosperity in the modern world by the neighboring nations?
- 2) Why were they reduced to an ethnic minority in the modern world?
- 3) Was there no way of resisting such fate?
- 4) What are the differences in this region between the medieval, the premodern, the mod-ern, and the postmodern worlds?

The inhabitants of this area did not record anything in written form until the modern period. This is why the only means to obtain clues to explore these questions are records left by the explorers of the surrounding countries, administrators, merchants as well as anthropologists and archeologists who conducted research, the memories handed down among the local people by way of oral tradition or oral literature and articles for everyday use and archeological relics stored in the museums.